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An
Inaugural Dissertation
on
Hypochondriasis
by
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This is an affection which is often met with, and proves not only the source of most exquisite misery to those who are the subjects of it, but it not unfrequently baffles the skill and exhausts the patience of the practitioner, so that the unhappy sufferer is left to sink into all the horrors of confirmed Melancholy, or to drag on a weary and hopeless existence.

Hypochondriasis (in the strict sense of the term) is most frequently found in persons of the Melancholic temperament, and rarely appears before the age of Manhood.

Its remote and proximate causes are various, and they may be either mental or physical; though by some it is supposed to depend entirely upon the former, and by others on the latter.

Intense study; & an inactive & sedentary life, are apt to induce this affection,

because a due proportion of exercise, is absolutely necessary to the health and well being of man and most other animals; the sudden disappointment of any favourite object, and the constant recollection of such loss; anxiety of mind; being long kept in a state of suspence; the immoderate use of intoxicating liquors; crude flatulent, or unwholesome food; immoderate venery, or long continued evacuations; and obstructions in the viscera, are among the most common causes.

Dr Cullen's definition of Hypochondriasis, is perhaps the very best; "A languor, listlessness, or want of resolution and activity with respect to all undertakings; a disposition to seriousness, sadness, and timidity; as to all future events, an apprehension of the worst or most unhappy state of them; and therefore, often upon slight grounds, an apprehension of great evil. Such persons, are particularly attentive to the state —

of their own health, to even the smallest change of feeling in their bodies; and from any unusual feeling, perhaps of the slightest kind, they apprehend great danger and even death itself."

In certain cases there are different symptoms, dependant upon peculiarities in the remote causes. I have known the patient to be remarkably fearful of those, to whom in health he was most strongly attached; and at times he was seized with an extravagant fit of generosity, and at others he was miserly in the extreme. Costiveness is not always an attendant upon this disease, {though regularity of the alvine evacuations, is not to be expected} neither are spasmodic pains in the head or other parts of the body; but the complaints of the patient are very numerous and diversified, so much so, that a history of them would be tedious, and would disclose perhaps nothing of importance. There is much

difference of opinion, respecting the original seat of Hypochondriasis; and it seems that the advocates of either supposition, have not made sufficient allowances for the intimate connection and sympathy existing between the Stomach and Brain. That it may be either a gastric affection from the beginning, or a mental one, may I think be proved by the following examples.

Supposing that misfortune or disappointment in the attainment of any important object, or any thing which creates great anxiety of mind, should occur in an individual of the melancholic temperament, and whose digestive organs should be at the time, in the performance of their healthy functions; which is the part first affected? Does the disease here depend upon torpor of the brain, thereby producing the same effects on the stomach and system generally? Again; a-

[illegible]

stomach and bowels, [illegible]

[illegible] medical [illegible] health. [illegible]
[illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

-will prove rather beneficial than otherwise, as there are many accounts of their being completely cured by so doing.

I have now brought to a close the observations which I intended to make on this disease; and beg leave to submit them with much deference to the perusal of the Professors; aware as I am of the deficiencies in this production, I can only claim to myself the consciousness of good intentions, of an earnest desire of making future advances in my profession, in the practice of which I expect to find opportunities of acquiring by personal observations on the character of diseases, the habit of more correct thinking, and of a more lucid arrangement of my thoughts.

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